

has to be given before those contracts are awarded.

This sets up a separate procedure that has no exception at all for it, even for an urgent situation. I am not sure if the gentleman has thought about what happens if there is a break in an oil line, what happens if there is a fire. They cannot go through a long bidding process for that. They have to take the money that is available and do an immediate contract. But even under those circumstances, there are procedures for competitive bidding and for open bidding, for making sure it is done in an open manner; and that is basically what the law that the Committee on Government Reform has the responsibility for is all about. That legislation, which is quite extensive, provides for open competition, provides for the bidding process, and it provides for the exceptions which are in there. And as I said last night on this floor, this body decided to eliminate at least one of those particular exceptions.

So I think we have thoroughly debated this issue, and I might say that the language as it is drafted here is not really, it seems to me, in legislative or legal form where it says "enter into any contract using procedures other than competitive procedures." That "other than competitive procedures" is not a term which appears in the law anywhere, so we do not know exactly what "competitive" means there. "Fully competitive" is something that does appear in the law, but "competitive" does not.

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So it is not at all clear what really the impact of this would be. Mr. Chairman, I oppose this amendment and urge its rejection.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIRMAN. All time for debate has expired.

The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN).

The question was taken; and the Chairman announced that the yeas appeared to have it.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Chairman, I demand a recorded vote.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) will be postponed.

The CHAIRMAN. The Committee will rise informally.

The Speaker pro tempore (Mr. LEWIS of California) assumed the Chair.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Ms. Wanda Evans, one of his secretaries.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Committee will resume its sitting.

EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT FOR DEFENSE AND FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN, 2004

The Committee resumed its sitting.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word, and I yield to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN).

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I have with me a bullet-proof vest. My colleagues can see that it is extremely heavy. It weighs about 16 pounds. I was horrified to learn that tens of thousands of our troops were sent out to battle without the proper armor and, to this day, they still lack necessary items, life-saving items like this bullet-proof vest.

Mr. Chairman, 44,000 troops do not have this bullet-proof vest that costs \$1,500. The family members are writing the checks and sending these vests to their family members. So the taxpayers are paying twice. They are paying their dollars. We are not getting assistance from any foreign sources. The family members are writing checks, sending these vests to their family members to make sure that they have the necessary items to protect their lives. This is unacceptable.

This is an important issue. I want every American citizen to know that the President did not request one penny for these vests. He did not request one penny for these vests. Mr. Chairman, 44,000 soldiers in Iraq without body armor, and the President did not ask for a cent to protect these soldiers. I guess our brave men and women will have to wait until Halliburton, Halliburton, Halliburton starts making body armor before they can get the protection they need and deserve.

Congress approved \$310 million in April to buy 300,000 bullet-proof vests for our troops; but, sadly, only 75 million of these dollars have gone to the officers, Army officers that are responsible for purchasing these vests.

Where is the accountability that this administration promised this Nation?

The Republicans keep telling us that this bill is all about the soldiers, and everyone in this Congress supports our soldiers. But how can a bill for our soldiers not include money for basic protection like body armor, boots, armored vehicles, Humvee tires, signal jammers, and chemical suits? We cannot even provide those brave men and women with simple, necessary items like drinking water, showers, tennis shoes, and even toothpaste. And women, they do not have personal items that they need. This is unacceptable.

Just 6 months ago, we appropriated \$79 billion for the war effort; and yet relatives have to resort to sending body armor to protect their family members.

The American people who are writing the checks for Iraq do not want a grants program. Like anyone who lends money in the real world, they want their money back.

I would encourage every citizen, if it were me, to call their Senator or their Congressperson and let them know that they do not support a blank check slush fund for this administration.

Vote "no" on the bill and "no" for another blank check for the President and his campaign contributors. Mr. President, this account is overdrawn.

I was horrified to learn that tens of thousands of our troops were sent out to battle without proper armor. And to this day, they still lack many necessary items. I spoke with several soldiers who suffered injuries to their legs, and many who totally lost their legs when bullets crashed through their vehicles because the cars were not fortified with armored plates. I met with soldiers who suffered chest injuries because they did not have bulletproof vests.

This is a very important issue, and I want the American public to clearly understand this point. Even though we have 44,000 soldiers in Iraq today without proper bulletproof vests, the President asked for absolutely nothing to protect these troops. Let me repeat that. We have 44,000 soldiers in Iraq without body armor, and the President didn't ask for a single cent to protect these soldiers. I guess these brave men and women will have to wait until Halliburton starts making body armor before they can get the protection they need and deserve.

Congress approved \$310 million in April to buy 300,000 bulletproof vests for our troops. But sadly, only \$75 million of that money has gone to the Army office that is responsible for purchasing these vests. Where is the accountability that this Administration promised this Nation.

The Republicans keep telling us this bill is all about the soldiers, and everyone in this Congress supports our soldiers. But how can a bill for our soldiers not include money for basic protections like Body Armor, Boots, Camouflage, Rucksacks, Armored Vehicles, Tank Tracks, Humvee Tires, Signal Jammers, and Chemical Suits. We can't even provide these brave men and women with simple necessities like drinking water, showers, tennis shoes, and even toothpaste.

Just 6 months ago, we appropriated \$79 billion dollars for the war effort, and yet relatives have resorted to buying body armor in the U.S. and shipping it to troops in Iraq. What happened to this money Mr. President. These families and this Congress want and deserve to know.

The American people who are writing the check for Iraq do not want a grant program. Like anyone who lends money in the real world, they want their money back. I would encourage every citizen to call their Senators and Congressperson to let them know that you do not support another Blank Check slush fund for this administration.

Vote no on this bill, and no on another blank check for the President and his campaign contributors. Mr. President, this account is already overdrawn.

I was shocked to find out that the Services did not fully meet immunization and other predeployment requirements. Based on GAO review of deployments from four installations, between 14 and 46 percent of servicemembers were missing at least one of their required immunizations prior to deployment. As many as 36 percent of the servicemembers were missing two or more of